Literature Reviews
Doing a Literature Review

(1) Identify a focused question for the literature review

(2) Locate articles, books, and research reports that address the issue

(3) Read the articles & identify the ones that are most relevant to your question

(4) Construct an orderly system to organize the information you have collected
Literature Reviews

“The **right** way to write a review is to organize common findings or arguments together.”

“The **wrong** way to write a review is to list a series of research reports with a summary of the findings of each.”

-Neuman, p. 78
Literature Review

“The first hurdle [in writing the review] to overcome is thinking something must be perfect just because it has been published.”

-Neuman, p. 77
Reasons for Doing a Literature Review

(1) Demonstrate familiarity with a body of literature & establish credibility
(2) Trace the path of prior research and contextualize your study within it
(3) Integrate & summarize what is known in an area
(4) Learn from others & stimulate new ideas
Appropriate Sources for Literature Reviews

**Best**
- Articles in peer-reviewed academic journals
- Chapters in academic books
- Ph.D. dissertations or M.S. theses

**Good**
- Government reports or documents
- Reports or documents from international organizations (e.g. World Bank, United Nations)
- Reports or documents from advocacy groups (NGOs)
Appropriate Sources for Literature Reviews

Adequate (under particular circumstances)

- Articles from good newspapers
- Articles from reputable newsmagazines or commentary/opinion journals
- Reputable websites
- Transcripts of broadcast stories

Inappropriate

- Textbooks
- Secondary or tertiary sources
- Unknown websites
- Non-news magazines
READING A

JOURNAL ARTICLE
Typical Format for Journal Articles

(1) Abstract
(2) Introduction
(3) Literature Review/Theory
(4) Methods
(5) Results
(6) Discussion
(7) Conclusion
Steps in the Research Process

1. Select Topic
2. Focus Question
3. Design Study
4. Collect Data
5. Analyze Data
6. Interpret Data
7. Inform Others

From W. Lawrence Neuman, 2003
Social Research Methods
Practice Article


What is the topic of this article?

What is the research question?

How were data collected?

How were data analyzed?

What are the important findings?
Purpose in Reading

What is your purpose in reading a journal article?

- Check relevance to a particular issue
- Understand results
- Understand theory or method
- Evaluate the research
Sections to Read

(1) Abstract
(2) Introduction & Conclusion
(3) Discussion
(4) Tables and Figures
(5) Results
(6) Lit Review/Theory
(7) Methods